

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND
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Support for Assemblymember Mike Fong’s Assembly Bill 1638 – Local

Government: Use of a Foreign Language

At the beginning of this year, the City of Monterey Park, instead of experiencing a joyous and celebratory Lunar New Year, experienced a mass shooting that injured nine and took the lives of 11 individuals. Many were also traumatized as survivors and witnesses to this terrible incident. Almost all the victims, survivors, witnesses, and impacted family members were either Asians or Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI).

For almost 48 hours, there were local, state, and national media reporting on the hour-by-hour, if not minute-by-minute, recap and overview of the incident, including airing the televised press conferences that law enforcement and first responders used to provide updates to the thousands, if not millions, who were watching.

The cities of Monterey Park and Alhambra, the latter which was a secondary site of where the perpetrator attempted to cause mass harm, are largely Asians or AAPI. In Monterey Park, more than 60% of the residents are of Asian descent and almost half of

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Alhambra's residents are of Asian descent. These two cities are part of the San Gabriel Valley, which about 67% of the residents were born in various parts of Asia.

Unfortunately, the information and updates that were provided was not in a language that the impacted community, family members, victims, survivors, and their families utilized or preferred as the vast majority spoke Mandarin, Cantonese, and Vietnamese. As a result, in the heavily Asian and AAPI communities, there was a lot of misinformation and confusion. Many residents didn't know that the shooter was on the loose for five hours¹ and later that the threat no longer existed while they remained in their homes in fear that the perpetrator was still out there to cause additional harm to their community.

For many of our immigrant residents, information is vital and when information is not accessible in a language they prefer or use, they feel like they are in the dark, which can be harmful and disastrous in times of mass trauma and violence.

Current law requires every local public agency that serves a substantial number of non-English-speaking people to employ a sufficient number of qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions or as interpreters to ensure provision of information and services in the language of the non-English-speaking person...any materials explaining services available to the public shall be translated into any non-English language spoken by a substantial number of public served by the agency.

In response to the misinformation and lack of information in the preferred language about the incident, Assemblymember Mike Fong introduced Assembly Bill

¹ <https://apnews.com/article/politics-law-enforcement-los-angeles-california-shootings-024e51999209bfb311f4d2f71690be52>

(AB) 1638 would require, in the event of an emergency in a jurisdiction where ten percent of the population or more primarily speak a language other than English, that the local public agency shall provide information related to the emergency in both English and the other language primarily spoken by that segment of the population.

Given a state and county as large and diverse as California and Los Angeles, it is incumbent on leaders and first responders to be culturally competent and linguistically inclusive for the constituents and residents it represents and serves, especially when delivery and receipt of information is vital.

The Los Angeles County (County) Board of Supervisors (Board) has taken efforts through the January 2022 [motion](#), “Strengthening Language Access in County Services”² and the March 2023 [motion](#), “Improving Language Access in Los Angeles County” to coordinate a plan to ensure there is countywide language access across the County systems and departments to demonstrate and actualize the Board’s commitment to provide culturally competent and language inclusive services that are accessible to all 10 million residents. Also, a few days after the Monterey Park mass shooting, the Board unanimously supported the motion, “Coordinating of Los Angeles County’s Response to Incidents of Mass Violence”³ with a directive that focused on AAPI older adults “to provide appropriate resources and trauma services, including those provided by community-based providers, that are linguistically and culturally appropriate.”⁴

There is much more work to be done to achieve cultural and linguistic

³ <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/177254.pdf>

⁴ Id.

accessibility and supporting AB 1638 is one more step to ensure that the County and State are aligned when it comes to providing our diverse residents with information in a language they prefer and understand, especially in times of emergencies.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office-Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch to support AB 1638 and funding proposals to provide local governments the resources needed to accomplish these efforts.

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